CLAIMS

1. A processing unit connectable to a data communications network, said processing unit having a data carrier reader operable to read a network address from a hand insertable data carrier, wherein said processing unit is operable to use said network address from said data carrier for communicating via said data communications network.

2. A processing unit as claimed in Claim 1, comprising a memory unit operable to store a first network address for use in communicating via said network, said processing unit being operable to determine whether said data carrier is present in said reader, said processing unit being operable to use said network address from said data carrier, if the data carrier is present in said reader and otherwise to use said first network address.

3. A processing unit as claimed in Claim 2, wherein said processing unit uses said network address from said data carrier only when said network address is present in said carrier reader.

4. A processing unit as claimed in any preceding Claim, comprising a read/writeable register, wherein said processing unit is operable to write said network address into said register read from said data carrier by said data carrier reader and to use said network address read from said register for communicating via said network.

5. A processing unit as claimed in Claim 4, comprising a register flag operatively associated with said read/writeable register, wherein said processing unit is operable to set said flag once said network address has been read from said data carrier, and thereafter to interrogate said flag and to use said network address read from said register if said flag is set.

6. A processing unit as claimed in Claim 5, wherein said processing unit is operable to read said first address from said memory unit if said flag is not set.

7. A processing unit as claimed in any preceding Claim, wherein said data carrier is a Smart card and said data carrier reader is a smart card reader.

8. A processing unit as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 6, wherein said data carrier is a Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card and said data carrier reader is a SIM card reader.

9. A processing unit as claimed in any preceding Claim, comprising a motherboard on which one or more processors are mounted, wherein said data card reader is mounted on said motherboard.

10. A processing unit as claimed in any preceding Claim, wherein said processing unit is connectable to first and second networks, wherein the network address read from said data carrier comprises two addresses, a first of said two addresses being used to communicate via said first network, and a second of said two addresses being used to communicate via said second network.

11. A processing unit as claimed in any preceding Claim, wherein said processing unit is replaceably mountable in a chassis arranged to receive said processing unit.

12. A processing unit as claimed in any preceding Claim, wherein said data carrier reader includes a securing mechanism to hinder removal of said data carrier when present in said reader.

13. A computer system comprising a communications network for providing data communications to devices connected to said network, and a processing unit as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 12, which is connected to said network, and is operable to use the network address read from said data carrier.

14. A computer system as claimed in Claim 13, comprising a computer having a chassis in which said processing unit is replaceably mountable.

15. A method of operating a computer system comprising:

- connecting a processing unit to a communications network, said processing unit having a data carrier reader;

- loading a data carrier into said data carrier reader, said data carrier having recorded thereon a network address for use in communicating via said network;

- arranging for said network address to be read from said data carrier; and

- arranging for said processing unit to use said network address read from said data carrier to communicate via said network.

16. A method as claimed in Claim 15, wherein said processing unit is replaceable, and the step of connecting a processing unit to a computer network comprises

- disconnecting a first processing unit from said communications network, and

- connecting a second replacement processing unit to said communications network in place of said first processing unit.

17. A device for use in a computer system, said device being connectable to a data communications network, said device having a data carrier reader operable to read a network address from a hand insertable data carrier, wherein said device is operable to use said network address from said data carrier for communicating via said data communications network.

18. A device as claimed in Claim 17, comprising

- a memory unit operable to store a first network address for use in communicating via said network, said device being operable to use said network address from said data carrier, if said data carrier is present in said reader and otherwise to use said first network address.

19. A device as claimed in Claim 18, wherein said device uses said network address from said data carrier, only when said network address is present in said carrier reader.

20. A device as claimed in any of Claim 17, 18 or 19, comprising

- a read/writeable register, wherein said device is operable to write said network address into said register from said data carrier reader and to use said network address read from said register for communicating via said network.

21. A device as claimed in Claim 20, comprising a register flag operatively associated with said read/writeable register, wherein said device sets said flag once said network address has been read from said data carrier, and thereafter interrogates said flag and uses said network address read from said register if said flag is set.

22. A device as claimed in Claim 21, wherein said device reads said first address from said memory unit if said flag is not set.

23. A device as claimed in any of Claims 17 to 22, wherein said data carrier is a Smart card or the like and said data carrier reader is a Smart card reader.

24. A device as claimed in any of Claims 17 to 22, wherein said data carrier is a Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card or the like and said data carrier reader is a SIM card reader.

25. A data carrier for use in combination with the processing unit as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 12, or the device claimed in any of Claims 17 to 24, having a recordable medium on which there is recorded a network address.

26. A data carrier as claimed in Claim 25, wherein said data carrier is a Smart card or the like, or a Subscriber Identity Module or the like.

27. A processing unit as herein before described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

28. A device for use in a computer system as herein before described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

29. A computer system as herein before described with reference to accompanying drawings.

30. A method of operating a computer system as herein before described with reference to the accompanying drawings.